RAJYA SABHA

Thursday, the 19th August, 1993/the 28th Sravana, 1915 (saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock. Mr. Chairman in the chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

चावल निर्यात को प्रोत्साहन दिया जाना

*321. **डा० जिनेन्द्र कुमार जैन** : †

श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज :

क्या प्रधान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या यह सच है कि देश में चावल के निर्यात को प्रोत्साहन देने की पर्याप्त संभावनायें हैं;

(ख) यदि हां, तो इस संबंध में सरकार की योजना की विस्तृत रुपरेखा क्या है;

(ग) क्या सरकार ने अलग से एक चावल निर्यात संवर्धन परिषद् स्थापित करने का निर्णय किया है;

(घ) यदि हां, तो उक्त परिषद् की स्थापना के संबंध में सरकार की योजना क्या है और परिषद् के ढांचे का ब्यौरा क्या है;

(ङ) क्या सरकार ने चावल निर्यात के प्रोत्साहन का दायित्व राज्य व्यापार निगम और खनिज तथा धातु, व्यापार निगम को सौंपने के प्रस्ताव पर विचार किया है; और

(च) यदि हां, तो इन निगमों को यह दायित्व निभाने में क्या आपत्ति है?

नागरिक आपूर्ति, उपभोक्ता मामले और सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री और वाणिज्य मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री का अतिरिक्त प्रभार (श्री कमालुद्दीन अहमद) : (क) से (च) एक विवरण-पत्र सभा पटल पर रख दिया गया है ।

विवरण

(क) जी, हां ।

(ख) नीति यह है कि चावल के निर्यात को इस ढंग से बढ़ावा दिया जाए जिससे हमारी खाद्य सुरक्षा पर आंच नहीं आए । बासमती तथा बहुत बढ़िया किस्म के गैर-बासमती चावल के मुक्त रुप से निर्यात की अनुमति है बशर्ते कि इसके लिए उस न्यूनतम निर्यात कीमत (एम ई पी) की शर्त का पालन किया जाए जो सरकार द्वारा समय-समय पर निर्धारित की जाती है । गैर-बासमती चावल के मामले में न्यूनतम निर्यात कीमत इस प्रकार निर्धारित की जाती है जिससे कि बहुत बढ़िया किस्मों के चावल के निर्यात को ही अनुमति मिले । इसके अतिरिक्त गैर-बासमती चावल के निर्यात को इस दृष्टि से भी, मानीटर किया जा रहा है कि निर्यात की गई कुल मात्रा पर नियंत्रण रखा जा सके । बासमती और गैर-बासमती चावल के लिए न्यूनतम निर्यात कीमत इस समय क्रमशः 550 तथा 225 अमरीकी डालर प्रति मीट्रिक टन है ।

(ग) और (घ) मामला सरकार के विचाराधीन है ।

(ङ) और (च) एसटीसी और एसएमटीसी चावल के निर्यात को प्रोत्साहन देने के लिए स्वतंत्र हैं । लेकिन, सरकार का इन अभिकरणों के जरिए अथवा किसी अन्य अभिकरण के माध्यम से चावल के निर्यात के सरणीकरण का कोई इरादा नहीं है ।

DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN : Sir, the present Government has the policy of liberalisation, but when it comes to the question of farmers, I see that the Government is adopting restrictive and regulative policies. It is common knowledge that if there is an increase in the export of rice, the farmers will be benefitted. I would like to know from the Government the rationale of its policy of fixing the minimum export price and placing restrictions on the quantity in the case of export of rice. I would like to give a specific example of how it is hitting the farmers. I would like the Government to explain this.

Sir, at the moment, as per the answer given by the hon. Minister, the minimum export price for basmati rice has been fixed at $550 per tonne. The prevailing, current price of the Thai and Vietnamese rice of the same quality at the moment in the international market is $220 per tonne. In view of this reality in its pricing in the international market, I would like to know whether a standing committee headed by Mr. A. N. Verma, Secretary to the Prime Minister, was set up, and the committee made its recommendations. The committee suggested that the minimum export price of basmati rice be reduced from $550 per tonne to $250 per tonne. Why has the Commerce Ministry rejected the proposal.

†सभा में यह प्रश्न डॉ० जिनेन्द्र कुमार जैन द्वारा पूछा ।

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please stop.

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED : Sir, I will explain the real position.

The position so far as basmati rice is concerned, is that India and Pakistan together have a monopoly in export. Now the position is that the average unit value of Pakistani basmati rice is not more than $400 per tonne, whereas the per unit value of Indian basmati rice is about $800 per tonne. This is mainly because of the fact that we have been able to keep up the quality of basmati rice. Pakistan has gone in for high-yielding varieties. This has affected its quality, and for that reason they have not been able to sell their rice at more than $400. We still have superiority and supremacy in the quality of rice, and we have no problem in selling our rice. Whatever be the availability in the market, we have been able to export almost 50 per cent of our production. We are not facing any problem or any difficulty in its export.

Now, coming to non-basmati rice, I would like to explain the position. India is not an exporting country as such of non-basmati rice. Non-basmati rice exporters are the US, Thailand and Vietnam. These are the three countries. Time and again we have been trying to export some non-basmati rice. As the hon. Member is aware and the hon. House is also aware, the recipient of the Indian non-basmati rice was the USSR. From the year 1992 we are trying to export our rice to the extent that the quantity is available for export. One basic factor in the country is that we have a large population for consuming this rice. Our production and our consumption almost go together. There is not much of a difference between the two. That is the reason why we always take a very very conscious decision so far as the exports are concerned. I do not think there has been any difficulty on that account. Recently we had reduced the minimum export price of non-Basmati rice to $225 from $250. This has in fact, encouraged the exports. Another thing for the information of the hon. Member I would like to say is that recently there has been a fall in prices of non-Basmati rice in the international market.

DR. JINENRDA KUMAR JAIN : Sir, are you satisfied that the hon. Minister has taken care of my question?

MR. CHAIRMAN : He has answered.

DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN : My point is that the question I asked has been totally ingnored. If you are satisfied, I move on to the second supplementary. Or you ask the hon. Minister.. *(Interruptions)*.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please, sit down. I am listening to the questioner. Let him speak. He does not need your help.

DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN : I will be totally guided by your decision. If you think the hon. Minister has replied to what I asked, I move on to my second supplementary.

MR. CHAIRMAN : What is the point on which you want his reply ?

DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN : Sir, the hon. Minister has made contradictory statements. He admits that reduction in the minimum export prices boosts exports. At the same time he says because they are able to sell the rice at whatever MEP they have fixed, there is no need to do anything further. I asked a specific question : Is it true that a Standing Committee headed by Shri A. N. Verma, Secretary to the Prime Minister, had recommended that the MEP should be reduced from the present $550 to $225. If so, why has the Commerce Ministry turned down that proposal ? This was my question.

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED : Such an exercise is normally taken up. Time and again they do make such an exercise and take stock of the situation. Now, this time I had made it amply clear about non-acceptance of the demand for reduction of the minimum export price of Basmati rice. I have submitted that if the minimum export price of Basmati rice is reduced, our situation also will become the same as is obtaining with Pakistan now. Pakistan is not able to sell their Basmati rice for a higher price, whereas we are able to sell our Basmati rice at a much, much higher price. And only 50 per cent of Basmati rice is available for export. If we allow the minimum export price to be reduced, the problem will be that all sorts of varieties will get mixed into that and the name and the prestige of Indian Basmati will go down.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Second Supplementary.

DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN : Sir,..

MR. CHAIRMAN : Don't flog him again. Ask your second supplementary.

DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN : I am only asking a secoond supplementary. Sir, my second supplementary is that corruption is a global phenomenon.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Why ? What has it to do with corruption? You talk about rice.

DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN : Sir, I am referring to the rice scandal.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Put your second question.

DR. JINENDRA KUMAR JAIN : I am referring to a press report which was published in *The Economic Times of India* on 19-6-93. This report is a release of *India Abroad News Service*. The title of the report is "India in Thailand Rice Scandal". I would like to verify the facts from my Government, because allegations made in the Parliament of Thailand are serious. According to the Opposition Members, they revealed serious charges of corruption against their Government which resulted in a loss of $20 million to India. (*Interruptions*). It is a loss of $20 million to the Government of India. I would like to know whether it is a fact that Indo-Thai trade talks were held in February, wherein a deal was negotiated that India would buy 2,80,000 tonnes of rice from Thailand at the rate of $185. This deal had matured. But the charge is instead of selling this rice to the Government of India at that price, it was sold to Pearson and Company which is a small brokerage firm of Holland. They have finally sold it to Iraq at $256 per tonne. That means in this deal which took place, the Government of India have lost $20 million. I want to verify the facts from the hon. Minister.

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am hearing it for the first time. I do not know where from the hon. Member has got this information.

श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज : सभापति जी, अभी एक पूरक प्रश्न के जवाब में मंत्री जी ने यह कहा कि यदि वे बासमती राइस का रेट कम कर देंगे, प्राइस कम कर देंगे तो गैर-बासमती चावल बासमती में मिलाकर बेचा जाएगा और देश की साख गिरेगी । मैं मंत्री जी से जानना चाहती हूं कि क्या यह प्रीकॉशन लेने के बावजूद भी उन्हें यह जानकारी है कि ऐसे कई राइस स्कैंडल सामने आये है जहां गैर-बासमती चावल को बासमती दिखाकर निर्यात किया गया है । इससे एक तरफ देश की साख को बट्टा लगा है और दूसरी तरफ बासमती चावल के निर्यात के जो आर्डर मिलने वाले थे उन पर बुरा असर पड़ा है । इसमें खास करके हरियाणा और पंजाब के लोग जो बहुत अच्छा बासमती चावल पैदा करते हैं उनको बहुत नुकसान उठाना पड़ा है । मैं मंत्री जी से जानना चाहूंगी कि इस तरह के फ्रॉड को रोकने के लिए सरकार क्या कदम उठाने जा रही है और जो एक्सपोर्ट काउंसिल गठित करने का मानना आपने कहा कि विचाराधीन है क्या आप उस काउंसिल को इस तरह के काम पर निगरानी रखने का काम सौंपने जा रहे हैं ?

श्री कमालुद्दीन अहमद : मैंने अभी जैसा कि कहा, यह इंडियन बासमती राइस जो 800 डालर के हिसाब से बिकता है उसका एक ब्रांड है । उस ब्रांड का—मेन जो इंडियन बासमती खरीदते है वह साउदी अरब है, जो लार्जर क्वांटिटी में खरीदते है और बड़ी कीमत देकर खरीदते है । अब बासमती के नाम से कोई इन्फीरियर क्वालिटी इसकी और जगहों पर अगर कहीं एक्सपोर्ट हुई है तो मेरे इल्म में ऐसा कहीं नहीं है कि कहीं किसी के साथ फ्रॉड किया गया हो और बासमती कहकर नान-बासमती दिया गया है... (**व्यवधान**)

श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज : बड़े-बड़े स्कैंडल हुए हैं और आप कह रहे है नहीं हुआ है... (**व्यवधान**) अखबारों में निकला है । बड़े-बड़े स्कैंडल हुए हैं कि नान-बासमती राइस को बासमती राइस दिखाकर एक्सपोर्ट किया गया है और आप इस सदन में पूछ रहे है कि अगर हुआ है ? मुझे हैरानी है ।

श्री कमालुद्दीन अहमद : आनरेबुल मेम्बर से मेरी गुजारिश यह है कि यह बासमती राइस जितना भी एक्सपोर्ट होता है वह ब्रांड नेम के साथ एक्सपोर्ट हो रहा है । यह मेरी गुजारिश आप सुन लीजिए और ब्रांड नेम्स के हर एक के अपने प्राइसेज फिक्स है और उस प्राइस के साथ वह बिकता है । अब यह बात कहना कि इसमें कितना हरियाणा का बासमती है, कितना देहरादून का बासमती है, किस क्वालिटी का बासमती है, बहुत मुश्किल है उसकी जानकारी निकालना । ये आर्डर्स आते है और आर्डर्स के लिहाज से उसको एक्सपोर्ट किया जाता है ।

श्रीमती सुषमा स्वराज : मेरे सवाल का जवाब नहीं आया ।

SHRI SOM PAL : Mr. Chairman, Sir, a big problem in promoting the export of rice is the maintenance of quality and availability of sufficient quantity year after year. There is a problem in maintaining the quality of basmati rice due to certain natural reasons. Our small farmers raise crop of rice in contiguous blocks of different varieties, like coarse rice, fine rice and basmati rice. So the cross-pollination, which takes place, makes the basmati rice impure. To overcome this difficulty, the Tenth Report of the Agriculture Committee had recommended that contract farming of basmati rice in separate blocks, away from the other varieties should be promoted by the Government. May I know from the Minister whether any steps have been taken by the Government to move in this direction ?

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I think the Ministry of Agriculture has definitely taken note of this recommendation. They may be doing something.

I do agree with the hon. Member that this basmati rice is particularly prone to so many diseases and insects. This problem is already there. I am sure the Ministry of Agriculture might have taken some action.

SHRI JAGESH DESAI : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Government has balanced views in this regard. I have listened to their views. I had been a Minister of Food and Civil Supplies in the Maharashtra Government and my experience had been that the prices of foodgrains are very sensitive. Once it was leaked out that some quantity of ordinary rice was going to be exported, the prices had gone up the next day to a very great extent. In fact, our Prime Minister intervened and said that whatever commitment we had made for export of rice, we would honour that but henceforth, we would not allow any rice to be exported. That happened I think 1½ years ago. I would like to know from the Minister whether the Government has taken some steps to ensure that the prices of foodgrains do not rise and that the consumers are not affected adversely. The prices of foodgrains are very sensitive and if it is known that even the average rice is going to be exported, the prices go up. Now, the Minister has said just now that the demand and supply is more or less equal. In view of that, the Government must see to it that such a policy by which the price of rice goes up, should not be announced. I hope the Government will look into this and ensure that for the sake of earning foreign exchange, our consumers, especially the vulnerable sections, are not affected.

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED : Sir, the minimum price fixed for the non-basmati rice is such that it helps the farmers to get a better price to some extent. Basically, it does not affect drastically the availability of rice and the price of rice in the market.

SHRI J. S. RAJU : Sir, the hon. Minister has said that the export of rice will be promoted in a manner so as not to compromise our food security. Sir, I am compelled to say that there is no coordination among the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Civil Supplies, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution and the Ministry of Agriculture ; the Centre is not able to meet the demand of the States with regard to rice for public distribution. In spite of the demand of one lakh tonnes of rice per month for Tamil Nadu, the Centre has been supplying only 17,000 tonnes. Sir, even if the Government goes ahead with the export of *basmati* and superfine non-*basmati* rice, which is not meant for public distribution, the farmers who now grow ordinary non-*basmati* varieties, will start growing rice of export variety thereby endangering our food security. Therefore, I would like to know from the Minister whether he has consulted the States which are the major rice producing States as also the States which are major rice consuming States. I would also like to know whether he has consulted the Ministry of Agriculture in the matter of export.

The second part of my question is, if the answer to the points raised by me is 'yes', then what was the reaction of the various States, particularly, Tamil Nadu ?

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED : Sir, the question seems to be more of the Civil Supplies Ministry. But anyway, I can answer it to some extent. So far as the policy of export is concerned, it is formulated in consultation with the Ministry of Civil Supplies and the Ministry of Agriculture. Then only the policy is formulated and I can assure the Member that there is no difficulty as such in implementing the policy.

SHRI T. A. MOHAMMED SAQHY : Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether rice export will affect the interests of the consumers. You see, if rice is exported, the prices will go up in the domestic market and the consumers will be affected. I would like to know whether the Minister has taken note of this fact. What is the protection for a farmer who produces *basmati* rice and superfine variety of rice if those varieties of rice are meant for export ? How will his interest be looked after ?

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED : Sir, I have just answered this question. The minimum price fixed for the non-*basmati* rice is almost 225 dollars, that is, a little over 6,000 rupees and almost on a par with the local prices.

SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY : Sir, when I was the Commerce Minister, I found that in the export of rice, the price shown and the quality of rice sent were not actually what was happening. In fact, the point raised by Dr. Jain about rice is something which the Commerce Ministry should be aware of. I would like to know from the Minister, therefore, whether he is aware that in the name of exporting *basmati* rice actually inferior varieties are sent and there is a systematic rip-off which is taking place between the rice mentioned in the invoice and the actual quality of rice that we send. I would like to know whether he is aware of that practice and

whether that practice has been brought to a stop. If he wants to know in which countries it is being done and which are the agencies who are doing it here, I would be happy to supply him. But we should know whether that practice has been going on and whether he would put a stop to it.

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED : Sir, 550 dollars per tone is the minimum price fixed for *basmati* rice. I don't think there will be any buyer who will buy non-*basmati* rice at the rate of 550 dollars per tonne.

SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY : No, no. Well, now I can get more specific. Where the question of rupee payments was involved, payment of 550 dollars in rupees was no problem at all. If the Minister is denying that such irregularities have taken place, then I would not press the question further. If he doesn't deny then, of course, he should tell us what the current position is, whether he is aware that such malpractices are going on.

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED : In specific instances I will definitely look into where it has happened and how it has happened. I can inquire into that.

SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY : That means he is not aware of it at the moment.

MR. CHAIRMAN : He will inquire into the facts and details.

Q. No. 322, Shri Gopalsinh Solanki.

पर्यटक स्थलों पर सूचना केन्द्र

*322. **श्री गोपाल सिंह जो० सोलंकी** : †

श्री राम सिंह राठवा :

क्या नागर विमानन और पर्यटन मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि : (क) क्या सरकार को इस बात की जानकारी है कि देश में इस समय राज्य-वार तथा नगर-वार पर्यटक-स्थलों से संबंधित कार्यालय हैं ;

(ख) क्या इन कार्यालयों में सूचना के आधुनिक साधन उपलब्ध हैं तथा क्या इन कार्यालयों को कम्प्यूटरीकृत करने का कोई प्रावधान है;

(ग) देश में ऐसे कितने पर्यटक-स्थल हैं जहां सूचना केन्द्र नहीं हैं तथा क्या वहां किसी प्राधिकृत एजंट को नियुक्त किया गया है ;

(घ) क्या सरकार चालू वित्तीय वर्ष के दौरान ऐसे पर्यटक-स्थलों में पूछताछ एवं सूचना कार्यालय खोलने का विचार रखती है ; और

(ङ) यदि हां, तो इस संबंध में ब्यौरा क्या है ?

†सभा में यह प्रश्न श्री० गोपाल सिंह जी० सोलंकी द्वारा पूछा गया ।

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRIMATI SUKHBANS KAUR) : (a) Yes, Sir, a list of Central Department of Tourism Field Offices in India is placed on the Table of the Sabha. (*See* below).

(b) The Regional Offices are equipped with modern electronic communication system which includes telephones, fax machines, telexes, TV, VCR, film projectors. A scheme for computerisation of these offices under a "TOURNET" project is also being implemented.

(c) Apart from the offices set up by Government of India, offices have also been set up by State Governments at places of tourist interest. Government of India does not have a scheme/system for appointing any authorised agents.

(d) and (e) There is no proposal relating to opening of new enquiries/information offices at tourist spots during the current financial year.

List of Central Department of Tourism Offices in India

Sl. No.	Region/State/U.T.	Location of the Office
I	*Northern Region*	
1.	Delhi.	1. Delhi
2.	Rajasthan	1. Jaipur
3.	Uttar Pradesh	1. Agra
		2. Varansi
II	*Eastern Region*	
1.	West Bengal	1. Calcutta
2.	Bihar	1. Patna
3.	Orissa	1. Bhubaneshwar
4.	Andaman & Nicobar.	1. Port Blair
5.	Assam	1. Guwahati
6.	Meghalaya	1. Shillong
7.	Manipur	1. Imphal
8.	Arunachal Pradesh	1. Itanagar
III	*Southern Region*	
1.	Tamil Nadu	1. Madras
2.	Karnataka	1. Bangalore
3.	Andhra Pradesh	1. Hyderabad
4.	Kerala	1. Cochin
		2. Trivandrum
IV	*Western Region*	
1.	Maharashtra	1. Bombay
		2. Aurangabad
2.	Goa	1. Panaji
3.	Madhya Pradesh	1. Khajuraho